

CHAPTER 4.

Public Awareness Program

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INTRODUCTION

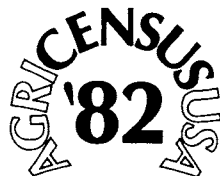
General Information

The public information program is a crucial part of any mail census, since the prompt and willing cooperation of people receiving report forms is absolutely necessary for the quick and economic collection of the data. This is, perhaps, particularly true with respect to agriculture operators, who are subjects of an extraordinary number of data-collection programs. The publicity program for the 1978 Census of Agriculture emphasized informing farm and ranch operators of the need for prompt response, and about how the data they supplied were used. The Bureau believed the 1978 campaign had been successful and planned to use a similar program for 1982.

The 1982 Census of Agriculture publicity campaign was a multimedia effort by the Bureau's Agriculture Division and Public Information Office (PIO) involving newspapers, farm publications, television, and radio. Briefings were held for Members of Congress, farm organization representatives, and agriculture editors. Informational materials were distributed to schools, businesses, individuals, and organizations throughout the country. The public information program continued through the enumeration period, with the main effort directed toward encouraging response through mid-1983, after which emphasis was switched to informing the public (especially potential data users) about the available data.

Theme and Logo

The Bureau used a very simple logo for the 1982 enumeration—the number "82" surrounded by "AGRICENSUSUSA" in a three-quarter circle. This was the same logo used for the 1978 census except for the year indicator.



CENSUS PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN

Radio and Television

The Bureau planned and carried out an extensive awareness campaign by radio as part of the 1982 publicity effort. In May 1982, planning and preparations for this campaign began with a meeting between Bureau staff and an advisory group composed of six members of the National Association of Farm Broadcasters (NAFB). This committee made suggestions and recommendations respecting the use of radio in the census publicity campaign.

The 1982 radio campaign was based on the 1978 effort, but on a somewhat reduced scale. A news story announcing the forthcoming census of agriculture was released to approximately 7,000 news media outlets, including over 1,000 radio stations, in April 1982. The primary radio publicity vehicle used thereafter was a 40-minute awareness-program tape, which consisted of a series of 1 1/2- to 3-minute public service announcements; statements of support for the census by agribusiness leaders, government officials, members of farm and ranch organizations; and interviews with prominent agriculture and agribusiness leaders. This tape was prepared by a public relations firm in the late summer and early fall of 1982, and 1,400 copies were distributed in January 1983, just as the census got underway. The Bureau also prepared a script for a 10-second public-service announcement and distributed copies to some 300 NAFB-affiliated radio stations and/or networks. Broadcasters provided "free time" for the census publicity announcements.

The expansion of special-interest programming and "networking" in recent years made television useful for reaching some groups. As part of the 1982 census publicity program, the U. S. Chamber of Commerce prepared a 30-minute panel discussion about the census and used it in broadcasts on its Biz-Net business television service. In December 1982, as the census was about to begin, the Bureau sent press kits—each containing a poster, a selection of news releases, and information brochures—to the ABC, CBS, and NBC television network morning news shows for use in preparing stories on the agriculture census. Kits containing a set of color slides illustrating the census story, together with a 10-second recorded public service announcement, were sent to 75 television stations around the country.

Agriculture Division also mailed a station-identification slide to 232 television stations in selected markets. This slide included the census logo, the mailbox from the census poster, and a short message: "Answer the Census of Agriculture."

Printed Materials

General—The 1982 census publicity program made extensive use of printed materials, including posters, information brochures, articles and information for distribution to magazines and newspapers, drop-in advertisements, standardized

speeches, agriculture census guides and lesson plans, and a series of census-related stories tailored to each State for use by local media.

Posters—The Bureau printed 152,000 10 1/2" x 14" posters, in green, yellow, and black ink on heavy stock, for use in the publicity campaign. Approximately 11,400 copies were delivered to USDA for distribution by its agencies, and 3,800 more were sent to the Farm Credit Administration. Ten copies of the poster went to each of 9,000 vocational agriculture teachers, while 2,000 were sent to the National Grange. A transmittal letter requested teachers to ask their students to place the posters in the windows of local businesses. The Bureau distributed additional copies to various private organizations and associations.

Brochures and standardized speeches and statements—The Bureau prepared three general-information brochures on the census for distribution at agriculture shows and conventions during the fall and winter of 1982. The first of these, form 82-A02(B), "Census of Agriculture Serves You," was a four-page folder that explained the need for the census, how the data are used, and when operators could expect to receive the report forms. The second, the form 82-A21, "A Preview of the 1982 Census of Agriculture"—an eight-page booklet—covered much the same territory, with additional information on the history, legal background, and scope of the enumeration. The brochure form 82-A01(B), "Your Farm or Ranch Counts," was used at shows and conventions, but its primary use was as part of the census mailout. There were 50,000 copies of the form A02(B), 15,000 of the A21 booklets, and over 60,000 A01(B) brochures printed for the publicity program.

The Bureau prepared a standard 6-minute speech for distribution to USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS)—3,100 copies, and Extension Service (ES)—2,900 copies. The Bureau contacted the Jaycees (junior chambers of commerce), Kiwanis, and Lions Clubs national headquarters, and these organizations ran notices in their respective newsletters on the speech availability.

Newspapers and magazines—In October and November 1982, the Bureau held meetings in Chicago, Atlanta, Washington, DC, and New York City to brief representatives of the business and agricultural press on the 1982 economic and agriculture censuses. The Bureau began early distribution of printed publicity materials in November 1982, when it sent 3,100 county governments promotional kits containing a press release announcing the start of the census, the text of a proposed county proclamation of the census, and a cover letter from the Bureau.

In 1982, the Bureau prepared and issued a series of 50 feature stories on agriculture, 1 for each State, and in December 1982, distributed copies to 6,000 weekly newspapers. At the same time, news releases explaining the census report forms were sent to 2,100 large daily newspapers throughout the country, as well as to 50 State bureaus of the Associated Press International (API) and United Press International (UPI) wire services. Press kits, containing the news releases announcing the census and explaining the report forms, brochures on the need for the census and the confidentiality of the data, and lists of questions frequently asked about the census, were sent to 2,400 trade publications, trade associations, and local chambers of commerce. The Bureau approached the editors of about 150 leading agricultural magazines and asked them to devote either their December 1982 or January 1983 issues' covers to publicize the census and offered oversize census envelopes and blank report

forms for magazine staff photographers to use in producing color photographs to illustrate stories on the census. About 80 magazines made use of these materials.

Low-response stories—During June and July 1983, while data collection still was underway, the Agriculture Division produced a series of articles describing the benefits derived from census data for publication in the 10 lowest-response States. Local data users, such as universities and research programs, were prominently mentioned.

Agriculture Census Guide—The *Agriculture Census Guide* (form 82-A20) was a 45-page reference manual prepared for use by county agents, vocational agriculture teachers, and others who helped farmers, ranchers, and other respondents complete their report forms. It contained step-by-step instructions for each section; each item was listed with an explanation of what kind of information was being requested and specific instructions on what *not* to include in any response. Copies of the guide, together with cover letters and/or additional materials (as listed), were distributed as follows:

Organization or agency	Copies	Contents
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS)	6,300	A20 Guide, 82-A20(L) cover letter
Soil Conservation Service (SCS)	3,200	A20 Guide, 82-A20(L) cover letter
Extension Service (ES)	3,100	A20 Guide, 82-A20(L) cover letter
Farmers Home Administration (FmHA)	2,350	A20 Guide, 82-A20(L) cover letter
Statistical Research Service (SRS)	100	A20 Guide Service
Farm Credit Administration	3,800	A20 Guide, 82-A20(L) cover letter
High school, college, and university vocational agriculture departments	15,000	A20 Guide, 82-A01(B) "Census of Agriculture Serves You" brochure, 82-A17 lesson plan, 82-A17 (L) cover letter

The Bureau distributed copies of the guide to its regional offices for reference purposes, and 2,000 copies were reserved for distribution at agriculture trade shows and conventions.

Agriculture census lesson plans—The Agriculture Division prepared lesson plans for use in vocational agriculture classes and distributed copies to 8,000 vocational agriculture teachers around the country. The first of these, distributed prior to the census, concentrated on proper completion of the census report forms. The *Agriculture Census Guide* was included in the mailing packages with this plan. A second lesson plan, covering use of the census data, was distributed after the census was completed. This plan had three parts—agriculture production, agribusiness development, and community development. Each post-census lesson plan package included a selection of preliminary reports— one U.S. summary, two State, and three county—to enable teachers to use the plan for local- as well as national-level data.

Special Materials

In addition to the printed and broadcast materials, the Bureau prepared an 11-minute program of 43 color slides and a cassette-recorded narration for use by civic groups through county

Cooperative Extension Service offices. The Bureau distributed 2,900 slide-show kits to county offices in January 1983, just as census data-collection began.

About the same time, the Bureau purchased approximately 3,800 1982 Census of Agriculture caps. These were similar to the baseball caps many companies furnish to customers as courtesy gifts, but bore the 1982 Census of Agriculture logo in place of the company name and logo. Several members of the Bureau's advisory committee on agriculture statistics had suggested distributing these caps as a means of getting free publicity, and the Bureau decided to try it on a small scale. About 1,700 caps were given away at shows and conventions, and a special program was undertaken in which some 200 farm broadcasters ran contests on census data with approximately 1,500 caps as prizes. The rest of the caps were distributed on request.

Agribusiness and Agricultural Organizations

The largest single user of agriculture census data is the Federal Government, but private business, particularly agribusiness, is a close second. Since the Bureau and agribusiness have a community of interest in achieving as complete and accurate a census as possible, the Bureau always has tried to get help from agribusiness in publicizing the enumeration and obtaining cooperation from agriculture operators. The publicity and informational materials (posters, brochures, guides, and so forth) distributed to the news media, county agents, vocational-agriculture teachers, and so on, were made available to agribusinesses and agribusiness associations, either directly from the Bureau or indirectly through USDA or other agencies. For use in their newsletters and in-house publications, the Bureau provided private businesses and/or business associations with copies of the "drop-in" advertisements distributed to the news media.

In December 1982, the Bureau began a major program to work with farmer and commodity organizations to promote the census. At the Bureau's request, the Secretary of Agriculture sent letters to 65 farm organization leaders reviewing the importance of census data and asking their help in encouraging response. In addition, special news features were prepared and sent to farm organizations' publications, and the Bureau provided staff and materials for information booths at conventions held by a variety of agriculture organizations.

The associations and organizations represented on the Census Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics (see p. 8 for list) cooperated with the publicity program to the fullest extent possible, including publicizing the census through their own promotional facilities, and having their representatives record and/or film interviews or statements supporting the census.

POST-CENSUS PUBLICITY AND ASSISTANCE TO DATA USERS

News Releases and Stories

News releases—Once the census was completed, the Census Bureau mounted a publicity campaign to inform prospective data users of the kinds of data being published and their availability. The Bureau prepared a series of news releases based on the 1982 census results. Beginning in September 1983, 50 stories were written from the preliminary data—one for each State—and copies were mailed to the national wire services, national and local daily newspapers, and local weekly papers, as well as

to agriculture-oriented magazines. Each two-page story contained highlights of the 1982 census data and comparative 1978 figures for each State, including information on number of farms, acres, sales, crops, livestock, and characteristics of farm operators, as well as illustrative charts. In addition, press releases for over 3,000 counties were mailed to daily and weekly papers nationwide.

Summary story—The State stories were followed in August 1984, by another on the Volume 1, *Geographic Area Series, Part 51, United States Summary and State Data*, which highlighted the statistics in that publication. The story concentrated on the increases in the value of all agricultural products sold and on the number of small farms as measured by the census. A detailed analysis of U. S. data also was prepared for release to agriculture finance and marketing media.

Feature stories—In 1985, the Agriculture Division staff wrote and distributed a series of feature articles on 1982 census data for small farms, irrigation, the decline in the number of medium-sized farms, farms with sales of \$500,000 or more, changes in the dairy industry, and the growth of the wheat industry.

Professional Meetings

To publicize the census, Bureau representatives attended trade shows and meetings of trade and commodity associations, and organizations representing the agriculture news media. In particular, they attended and sometimes spoke at meetings of such organizations as the American Agricultural Editors' Association, Newspaper Farm Editors of America, National Association of Farm Broadcasters, National Grange, National Turkey Federation, and the National Farmers Union. Attendance at such professional meetings provided opportunities not only to publicize census activities, but to receive suggestions for improving the Bureau's efforts. For example, responding to suggestions made by attendees at these meetings, the Bureau began including charts and graphs illustrating the census data in its agriculture census news releases.

Census Tables

The census tables program initiated by the Bureau was designed to provide data users with opportunities to see what information was available from the Bureau's programs and to meet and discuss the data with the Bureau's subject-matter specialists. The census table meetings were organized on the basis of subject matter and were "sponsored" by the Bureau's regional offices, which were responsible for determining whether a meeting should be held, scheduling the activity, providing support services, and inviting data users and the appropriate Bureau staff. Nine census table meetings on 1982 Census of Agriculture data were conducted in 1984-1985; the locations and dates of the meetings, and the sponsoring regional offices, were:

Location	Date	Sponsoring office
Bakersfield, CA	4/24/84	Los Angeles, CA
Davis, CA	4/25/84	Los Angeles, CA
Fresno, CA	4/26/84	Los Angeles, CA
Greenville, NC	10/11/84	Charlotte, NC ¹
West Lafayette, IN	11/7/84	Chicago, IL
Topeka, KS	12/6/84	Kansas City, KS
Hopkinsville, KY	3/26/85	Charlotte, NC ²
Athens, GA	5/12/85	Atlanta, GA
Auburn, AL	5/15/85	Atlanta, GA

¹Co-sponsored by the North Carolina State Data Center.

²Co-sponsored by the Pennyrile Area Development District (an affiliate of the Kentucky State Data Center).

Audiovisual Program

The Agriculture Division and the PIO prepared an audiovisual program about the 1982 Census of Agriculture for public information use. The program kit consisted of 62 color slides and a recorded narration (on audio cassette) providing a brief outline of the census operation and statistical highlights from the results of the 1982 Census of Agriculture. The program was designed for use by the Bureau's regional offices and State data centers, USDA Extension Service (or other) offices, farmer organizations, and other farmer and/or data user oriented activities. A total of 1,500 program kits were prepared and distributed to regional offices, USDA offices, and agriculture organizations in the spring and summer of 1985.

Guide to the 1982 Census of Agriculture and Related Statistics

In 1984, the Bureau's Data User Services Division (DUSD), in cooperation with the Agriculture Division, prepared a 23-page *Guide to the 1982 Census of Agriculture and Related Statistics*. The guide consisted of a brief outline of the background and

procedures of the census, descriptions of the agriculture census data series and the media in which they were available, together with descriptions of other Census Bureau data sets that included agriculture-related information. The publication schedules for both the 1982 economic and agriculture census programs, lists of reference sources, and order forms for the data products were included. Copies of the guide were distributed to the Bureau's regional offices and professional advisory committee members. They were made available to the public on request at Census Bureau booths or presentations at conferences and conventions around the country and from Agriculture Division or DUSD.

Analysis of Clippings

The Bureau carried out a study of the effectiveness of its publicity campaign by collecting and reviewing newspaper and magazine articles derived from the 1982 Census of Agriculture press releases. The releases appeared as editorials, stories, as one-paragraph fillers, and as feature stories complete with a dot map and occupying as much as 20 column inches. Stories that appeared to get the most "play" were the 1982 State data from preliminary reports.